

FOUR CASES OF SECONDARY SYPHILIS COMPLICATED WITH CHRONIC APPENDICITIS, IN WHICH A CONTINUOUS COURSE OF TONIC DOSES OF MERCURY RESULTED IN MARKED SUBSIDENCE OF THE APPENDICULAR SYMPTOMS.¹

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THE cases here set forth are recounted that the attention of the profession may be directed to what seems to be somewhat remarkable results following the use of what is known as "tonic doses" of mercury in cases of syphilis, complicated with chronic appendicitis, where surgical interference had been clearly indicated, but declined by the patient.

It is hoped that this paper will attract attention, so that those who have had experience similar to my own may bring their cases to the notice of the profession, and sufficient data collected whereby conclusions may be reached as to the expediency of employing mercury under the circumstances detailed.

Every surgeon from time to time meets with cases of chronic appendicitis where an operation is necessary, but will not be submitted to by the sufferer; it is believed that to this class the treatment here suggested may be of service.

My attention was first attracted to the beneficial effects of prolonged doses of mercury in chronic appendicitis by the result of the treatment of a patient who came under my care

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four years ago, suffering from secondary syphilis, accompanied by chronic appendicitis; since then I have had three similar cases, where the individuals were affected with secondary syphilis, and who had had frequent attacks of appendicitis before the syphilitic treatment was begun.

The persons had from time to time consulted many surgeons, each of whom had strongly advised the removal of the appendix.

In each case I advised that an operation should be performed when the disease under which they labored had been brought under control. One of the patients had been under my care for four years, two for two and a half years, and one for the space of a year and a half. Two have had one attack each of acute inflammation of the appendix during the first six months of their mercurial treatment; the remaining two have had no trouble since they have been under specific treatment.

As a result, the patients have been improved in health and strength and have gained in weight; there is a marked improvement in their digestion, while the constipation, which existed in a marked degree, has given way to a regularity almost normal.

The histories of these cases are briefly as follows:

CASE I.—H. H., merchant, forty-one years old, consulted me four years ago, suffering under the ordinary symptoms of mild secondary syphilis. He averred that he had had nine attacks of appendicitis, and had only recently recovered from the last seizure. He was pale and anæmic, and stated that he was below his natural weight. His appetite was good, but he suffered from obstinate constipation, for the relief of which he was in the habit of taking a grain of podophyllin daily. He had consulted four of the most distinguished surgeons of the city; all had strongly urged the removal of the appendix.

On examination an indurated mass could be distinctly felt in the right iliac fossa; it was somewhat tender to the touch. The danger of the non-removal of the appendix was carefully pointed out, and an operation was recommended, to be per-

formed as soon as the syphilitic affection was under control and the general health somewhat improved. His "tonic dose" of the protiodide of mercury was found to be 10/5, which was administered in three doses during the twenty-four hours. His diet was restricted to plain nourishing food; violent exercise was interdicted. The patient's general health rapidly improved; the syphilitic symptoms disappeared; the red blood-corpuscles increased in number, and the operations from the bowels became normal.

After the individual had been under treatment for the space of two months an acute attack of appendicitis was suddenly developed, and for two days I hesitated whether or not an operation should be performed. He, however, gradually improved, when the mercurial treatment was resumed, and continued without intermission until January, 1896, a period of three years.

At this time he is in better health than he has been for years. He has had no return of appendicitis since the last attack that he sustained shortly after he placed himself under my care, nearly four years ago. The doughy mass which at that time could be distinctly felt in the iliac fossa has entirely disappeared.

CASE II.—G. W., aged thirty-one years, broker, came under my care three and a half years ago, suffering from the symptoms of secondary syphilis. He had had three attacks of acute appendicitis. He suffered from intestinal dyspepsia accompanied by costiveness. His general health was below par. He was placed on a "tonic dose" of protiodide of mercury, which was followed by rapid amelioration of his physical condition. He had been under treatment about a year when a slight attack of acute inflammation of the appendix was developed, which was promptly arrested. When he was fairly convalescent an operation was urged, but declined, and the mercurial treatment was resumed. From that time the patient has had no further trouble from his appendix. His general health is excellent.

CASE III.—L. S., lawyer, twenty-eight years old, began to be treated by me three years ago for a recent attack of syphilis. He stated that he had had five attacks of appendicitis. He had consulted several surgeons, who had all recommended the removal of the appendix. His general health was fairly good. The right iliac fossa was tender to the touch, and a doughy mass could be distinctly outlined on palpation. He was placed on

proper tonic doses of protiodide of mercury, when he gradually improved in health. He has had no further trouble with his appendix.

CASE IV.—O. A., aged thirty-three years, businessman, came under my observation for the first time a year and a half ago, suffering from secondary syphilis. He stated that he had had two attacks of acute appendicitis. He was pale, weak, and anæmic; complained of indigestion and constipation. An examination of the iliac fossa revealed marked signs of chronic appendicitis. He was placed on tonic doses of protiodide of mercury, which have been continued to the present time.

During the period that he has been under my care he has had two attacks of appendicitis; the last, which occurred during the month of June, was probably brought on by bicycle riding, indulged in contrary to my explicit directions. Since last June he has had no further appendicular trouble, although he suffers from intestinal dyspepsia, with a tendency to constipation. His general health is below par.

The histories of these four cases seem to be of more than usual interest. Catarrhal forms of appendicitis, where the individual may have had one or more acute attacks of the malady, are the experience of all; but the chronic form of appendicitis following acute attacks to succumb to the employment of tonic doses of mercury appears remarkable and well worthy of further consideration. All these cases were so well marked that any surgeon would have considered himself justified in operating.

These four cases make too limited a number upon which to base practical deductions whereby to arrive at definite conclusions as to the remedy employed; the abatement of the inflammatory appendicular symptoms might possibly have been coincidental, or resulted from restrictions in diet, improvement in hygiene, or the effect of the mercury upon the morbid condition. It is to be hoped, however, that by directing the attention of the profession to these cases that the experience of others may be elicited, and a thorough discussion of the subject ensue; that a definite conclusion may be reached, and the value of the remedy, which apparently proved so valuable in my hands, fairly tested.